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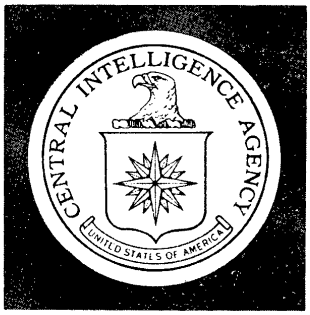

The President's Daily Brief

17 April 1969

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18 April 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF 17 APRIL 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

SOVIET AFFAIRS

Yesterday's events in Czechoslovakia mark the end of the Dubcek experiment to fuse socialism with democracy. The "realism" of new party first secretary Gustav Husak replaces the idealism of Alexander Dubcek. To most Czechoslovaks, the change means succumbing to Soviet pressures with a new leadership responsive to Moscow's demands.

The central committee reduced the size of the party presidium from 23 to 11 members, in the process removing from power 11 of Dubcek's moderate and liberal supporters.

The new leadership is dominated by "realists," most of whom, like Husak, believe that the only feasible course is cooperation with Moscow. Dubcek was named to the new presidium, but the outspoken Josef Smrkovsky was dropped. The shifts probably presage similar changes in the government leadership.

Husak advocates closely controlled reform. In his maiden speech, Husak said his administration would not abandon the reforms begun last year, but their continuation was absolutely dependent on an end to anti-Soviet dissidence. He said he intends to review reform programs, and warned that under his leadership liberty would not be "without limits."

Husak faces an uphill task. He must try to convince the people that the changes are for the best. In order to be effective, he must overcome the distrust of the Czechs, many of whom despise his Slovak nationalism and his attacks on the liberal mass media.

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Prague was quiet last night. The general public may well turn away from politics with an air of resignation. Young workers and students are likely to be less tractable. (Central Intelligence Bulletin, 18 Apr)

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The Soviets yesterday conducted their first extended-range test of an SS-9 ICBM carrying multiple re-entry vehicles.

[redacted]

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[redacted] Yesterday's flight was the first in what may be a series of extended-range tests. (Central Intelligence Bulletin, 18 Apr)

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There is nothing significant to report on the Middle East, Europe, or Vietnam.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

KOREA

At today's Military Armistice Commission meeting, the statement of the senior North Korean representative dealt only with charges of DMZ violations and made no mention of the aircraft shootdown. When the UN Command member, General Knapp, made his protest, the North Korean asked to what unit the plane had been attached. After this question was reiterated, General Knapp walked out. [redacted]

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The Soviet destroyer Vdokhnovennyy, rendezvousing with the USS Tucker, this morning turned over a number of items of clothing and equipment recovered from the downed aircraft.

[redacted]

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

SOVIET AFFAIRS

Alexander Dubcek is out as first secretary of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, but is still on the Presidium. Dubcek has been replaced in the top party job by Gustav Husak, whose more conservative bent is less grating to Moscow. Husak, a fierce Slovak nationalist whose elevation will be resented by the Czechs, has adopted a more pragmatic approach to relations with the Soviet Union.

The Czechoslovakian party central committee has been meeting all afternoon and some announcement of its proceedings is expected early this evening. Meanwhile, the atmosphere in Prague is tense with security forces prepared for demonstrations. With Dubcek out, there could be trouble in the capital city tonight.

We will be reporting developments during the evening and will summarize the situation in the Late Notes tomorrow morning.

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VIETNAM

North Vietnam is far along in laying an oil pipeline system to provide logistic support of the war effort in

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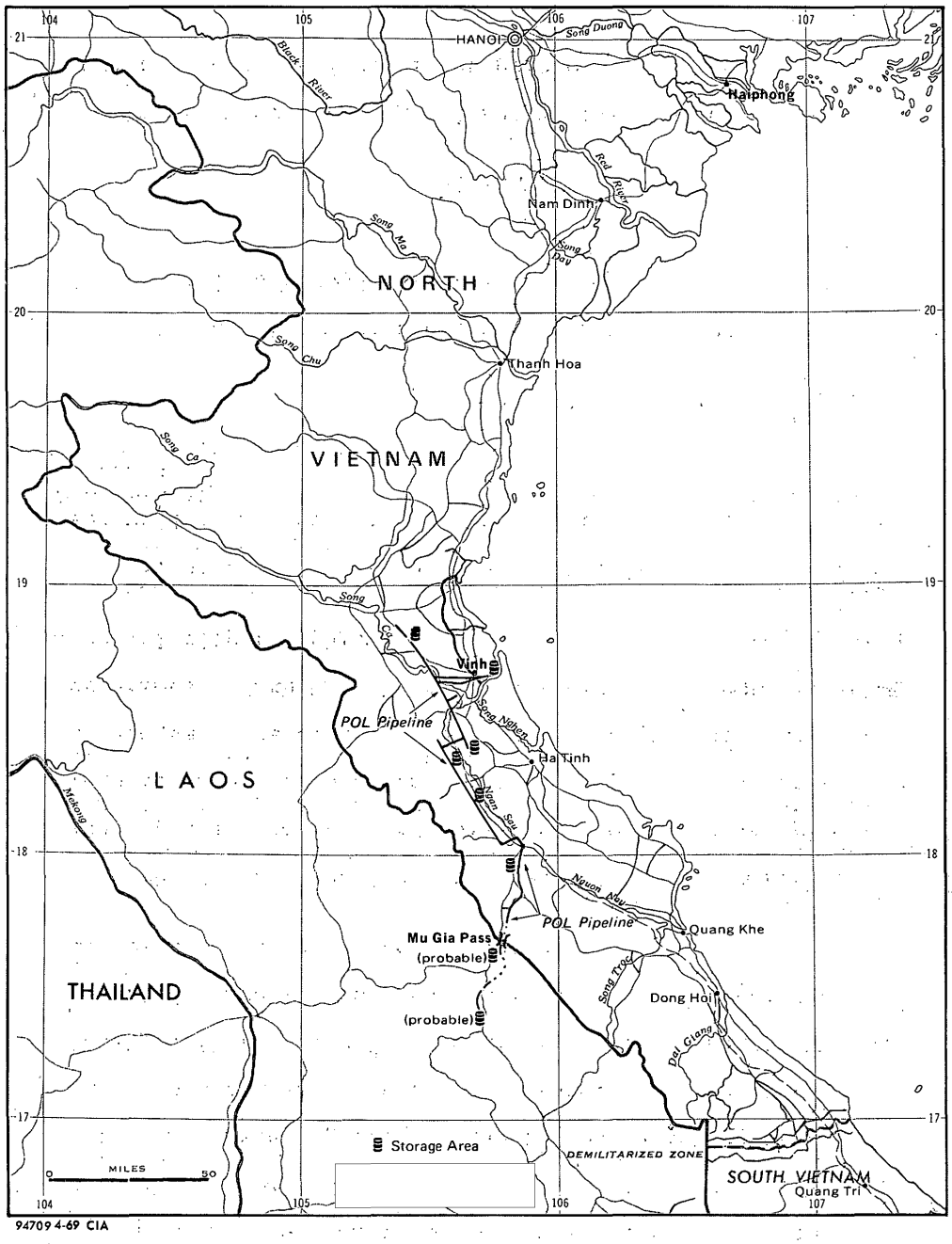

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South Vietnam and Laos. Since last spring, some 100 miles of a pipeline have been laid through the southern provinces of North Vietnam and extended this year into the Laos panhandle by way of Mu Gia Pass. The system now appears to be operational from Vinh west to the main north-south line and south to a point about 15 miles north of Mu Gia Pass.

Petroleum currently is being shipped from Haiphong to Vinh by barge. A branch pipeline forwards it from Vinh to the main line. A duplicate segment from Vinh is under construction, probably to provide an alternative to the first line. The additional capacity is not needed. The pipeline system is believed capable of transporting some 1,000 tons of petroleum a day, sufficient to meet the requirements of all consumers in South Vietnam and Laos.

The area immediately north of the DMZ is not yet served by pipeline, but this may be provided for in plans for further expansion. 50X1

MIDDLE EAST

There is nothing significant to report.

EUROPE

There is nothing significant to report.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

KOREA

The South Korean Government seems anxious not to get too far ahead of the US position on the shootdown. In a relatively moderate statement the government today condemned the "outrageous, illegal, barbaric" North Korean action and called on the "US and free world...to take prompt and effective countermeasures to prevent once and for all the Northern puppets from playing with fire and provoking war." The statement avoided any demand for immediate military retaliation and only asserted that North Korea's leaders "should receive due punishment for the crime they committed." In contrast to official caution, the press is continuing to call for immediate retaliation.

Japanese Prime Minister Sato publicly censured Pyongyang in the Diet today. He said that the North Korean action should be "internationally condemned." Sato, however, expressed a hope that the US would take a cautious attitude and that the incident would not develop into any further conflict. This clear preference for US restraint, which underlies popular attitudes toward the incident, has also been reflected in commentary by Foreign Minister Aichi, Japanese defense officials, and in the news media. Sato also implied a concern that US retaliation might affect the progress of negotiations on the return of Okinawa to Japanese administration.

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NIGERIA

The Biafrans still hold Umuahia, but the civilian administration has apparently left and the Red Cross has moved its headquarters to a town about 14 miles from Biafra's one operating airstrip. Colonel Ojukwu was still in Umuahia on 16 April, but unless federal forces are driven back soon, Ojukwu himself will probably move.

The large-scale civilian exodus from Umuahia, where many Ibo tribesmen had sought refuge during previous federal advances, will further complicate Biafra's already serious refugee problem.

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